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WHAT JEWS MAY LEARN FROM
HARNACK.

FOR the last century, many of the best Jewish thinkers have been endeavouring to discover an effective remedy against apostasy from Judaism, which is assuming threatening aspects in many circles. The reason for the increase in the number of Jews who receive baptism is often alleged to lie in their ignorance of their own religion. They are said never to have learned what Judaism really is; they have neither love nor respect for it; and do not, therefore, realize what they *renounce* when they turn their backs upon the faith of their fathers. But it may be maintained that ignorance of the Jewish religion is not the only factor. An equal and perhaps stronger motive lies in ignorance of the new religion. The converts to Christianity do not, in most cases, know what they *adopt* when making their profession of the Christian faith, and they would be greatly embarrassed by an examination in the doctrine uttered by their lips. For this reason Jews, in order to remain faithful to their own religion, should not only study Judaism, but should also make themselves acquainted with the Christian religion, at least in its outlines.

It must be admitted that the ordinary manuals of the Jewish religion and Jewish history supply pupils or readers with a very insufficient idea, if with any at all, of Christianity. From an exaggerated timidity, or a fear of using some word liable to be misunderstood, the authors prefer to omit the subject altogether, even where it may

demand a thorough elucidation. Such a game of hide-and-seek, which on other occasions also is a feature of modern Judaism and has done much harm, is particularly inappropriate in this case. Only recently Professor Hermann Cohen pointed out¹ that a careful treatment of the differences between Judaism and Christianity ought to be one of the principal subjects of instruction in religion. What injury can possibly arise to Jews from a calm and intelligent discussion of the Christian religion among whose followers they live? The polemic against Judaism occupies a considerable portion of Christian religious instruction; and although Jews, from their side, never will undertake such polemic, and as hitherto will be at pains to banish from their schools every offensive and uncharitable expression against other religions, it would, nevertheless, be foolish and dishonest to conceal the differences in the principles of Judaism and Christianity. It is in consequence of an incredible shortsightedness that many Jews are reluctant to examine more closely the nature of the Christian religion. It seems as if they were afraid that, in doing so, harm would accrue to their own faith. But Judaism need not fear a comparison with its daughter-religion; it can only gain by it. And as Maimonides narrates that he read all works on the heathen religions that were accessible to him, Jews have all the more reason for making themselves acquainted with the Christian religion, for—to use a well-known expression in a somewhat modified form—he who does not know other religions does not know his own. Every well-educated and thinking Jew will gain a profounder conception of the value and weight of the Jewish teaching, if he be able to compare the latter with some other religion, and particularly with Christianity, which exhibits, on the one hand, so many points of affinity, and, on the other hand, such far-reaching differences. He will then consider Judaism from quite a new point of view; fresh elements of superiority will disclose themselves; he

¹ *Zeitung des Judenthums*, 1901, No. XXII, p. 256 b.

will even be enabled to regard in a more favourable light certain deficiencies and weaknesses of which he formerly disapproved. His range of vision in respect to religion will be enlarged ; his judgment about his own and about the other religion will become more unprejudiced and just after knowing both, in the same way as one only obtains a complete knowledge and appreciation of one's own country, after having travelled in foreign lands.

But how is a Jew to study the Christian religion ? Is he to make a study of the New Testament, and, thereupon, go through a catechism ? This would as little answer the desired purpose as it would serve a Christian who sought to acquire an idea of the Jewish religion of the present day to study the Pentateuch and Maimonides' articles of faith. A work was wanting to elucidate the substance of the Christian religion on a scientific basis, and, at the same time, in language intelligible to the public, and in a terse and clear style. Such a book has now appeared¹, and from the pen of a man who appears to be capable above all others for such a task.

Adolf Harnack, professor at the university of Berlin, is undoubtedly not less famous among English scholars than among those in his own country. He occupies in the learned world the position he deserves from his profound erudition, his critical powers, and not less from the moral earnestness which is displayed in all his works. He may, without exaggeration, be called one of the greatest Christian theologians of the present day. This would be sufficient to secure him sincere appreciation of Jews ; but he has, besides, some special claims to their sympathy. He has publicly and boldly defended his religious standpoint against a world of enemies, and has, in consequence, become a very martyr for his convictions. It is especially the Jewish community, which has suffered so much, and partly suffers

¹ *Das Wesen des Christentums*. The work has since been translated into English by T. Bailey Saunders, with the title *What is Christianity?* (London, Williams & Norgate, 1901.)

still, for its convictions, that must feel sympathetically drawn towards him, and we can in all sincerity apply to him the beautiful words of the poet:—

“Durchbrechen seh’ ich euch mit fester Faust
Die mörderischen Stricke der Bestallung,
Dem Menschendienste entfliehn, um Gott zu suchen.”

(Gerhart Hauptmann, *Die versunkene Glocke* III.)

Most of his writings, which deal with ecclesiastical history in its widest range, are of a strictly learned character, and are, therefore, unknown to the public at large. But last year, Harnack summarized his inquiries into the essential characteristics of Christianity in a series of lectures held before students of all faculties, and he subsequently placed them before the public in book form. With a precision only attainable by a scholar who draws upon the fullness of his learning, he presents in 189 pages¹ a vivid picture of the rise and development of Christianity down to our own time. He delineates the figure of Jesus Christ and his teaching with great religious ardour and the greatest possible objectivity, and sketches the characters of the Apostles as well as of Martin Luther. He tries to point out the peculiarities, the merits, and the faults of Catholic, Greek, and Evangelical Christianity, and formulates his own standpoint, from which he never deviates throughout the work.

As a matter of course, Harnack addresses in the first instance only Christian readers, but every educated Jew will enjoy the reading of the book, and will derive very much information from it in many directions, and, as we pointed out before, without injury to his own religion. Indeed Harnack's work is, without the author's desire or intention, the most brilliant justification of Judaism that could be possibly desired. This we propose to show in the following remarks.

Harnack's Christianity differs fundamentally from the

¹ The quotations are all translated from the second German edition.

official Christianity, taught and professed by the churches of the various denominations, and solely approved by the State. On the basis of historical data, and of his own reflections, he constructs quite a new Christianity, which, in his opinion, represents the gospels, if rightly understood. For this purpose he must, of course, eliminate from the Christianity of the present day everything which cannot stand the test of reason and of critical research, though the discarded elements be that which is posited by the Church as the most essential part of the faith. The Christology, the whole doctrine of the trinity, hereditary sin, the bodily resurrection of Christ, the so-called truths of salvation, which one must believe in to be saved, all this is expunged from his Christianity. We almost feel constrained to ask: what remains of all that has hitherto been considered as specifically Christian? And indeed the representatives of ecclesiastical orthodoxy, who attacked Harnack at the beginning of the nineties on account of the dispute about the Apostolic Creed, could not refrain from unanimously adopting, at their pastoral conference at Berlin, the following declaration: "The Pastoral Conference, whilst recognizing in Professor Harnack's lectures on the essence of Christianity the intention to impress again upon our generation, which is anti-Christian in so many ways, the blessings of Christianity, expresses its conviction that the contents of these lectures, on account of a falling back upon the superficial standpoint of an already refuted rationalism, and of the rejection of that which is the essence of Christianity according to Scripture and history, do not accord satisfactorily with historical insight, with the true gospel, nor with human needs . . ." This narrow declaration on the part of the authorized representatives of a religion, which, in contrast to Catholicism, holds up the banner of freedom of research, appears, indeed, quite unintelligible to us, but teaches us at the same time, that the evangelical clergy understand under Christianity something quite different from what Harnack understands by it. Jews,

as outsiders that have no part in that religious controversy, need not be intolerant, and admit that Harnack has a right to designate *his* religion as Christianity. It is true Christianity has never anywhere assumed a form at all similar to the one offered here, nor does there even in our days exist any community that flocks round Harnack and shares his standpoint¹. Nevertheless, the name of Christianity is applicable to the religious view he has of the world, for he acknowledges, if not the divine character of Christ, yet his person as the highest moral and ethical ideal. Besides, who could blame Harnack if he designates his own religion by a name under which he had been wont, ever since his infancy, to comprehend that which is most beautiful and good? All great religious thinkers who break through the bonds of tradition, and evolve a new religious system out of their own cogitations and sentiments, apply to their new teachings the name of the religion in which they were born. They do this in consequence of their filial piety, and of a very intelligible self-deception; they all profess to teach the old religion in its purity, freed from all that tended to deface it. Thus Tolstoi calls his view of the world a Christian view, notwithstanding that he was excommunicated for it by the orthodox Church; Döllinger considered himself to be a good Catholic, although Rome repudiated him in no very gentle manner; and, as Joel rightly points out, even Spinoza is at pains to exhibit, in his *Theologico-political Treatise*, a harmony with traditional religion, although it is a harmony in words and phrases only, and not in substance.

¹ On pp. 172, 173, Harnack, when formulating his views and demands, uses all along the expression "we." He can only denote thus such as agree with him, but not a denomination in whose name he speaks. It is true, immediately preceding, we find the phrases "a really spiritual community of evangelical Christians, a common conviction in the most important, and its application to the variegated life, has arisen and is in force"; but, unfortunately, he does not make it clear to us, by whom this spiritual community is constituted and in which way it finds its expression.

Harnack's standpoint is for us of particular interest, because he excludes from Christianity those very elements which always appeared to the Jews impossible to adopt. He performs a radical operation on the body of the traditional form of religion; he first removes small excrescences and disfigurements, and then proceeds to extirpate some most important organs. However much it grieves him to the very soul, he resolutely makes the sharp incision, in order to save the threatened gospel. When we look upon this great and religious thinker, and perceive the critical reductions he is obliged to make from the Christian doctrine; when we see what a sacrifice it is to him to break with venerable and beloved notions, the tenderness with which he approaches the diseases of official Christianity, what desperate efforts he is forced to make in order to find a justification for certain details; when we see how the man, whose object it is "to prevent Protestantism from becoming a pitiable double of Catholicism," almost goes himself to Canossa¹—the words of our morning prayer involuntarily rise up before us: "Happy are we, how goodly is our portion, how pleasant our lot, how beautiful our inheritance. Happy are we, who early and late, in the morning and in the evening, pronounce twice every day, 'Hear, O Israel, the Eternal is our God, the Eternal is One.'" The Jew, especially the Jewish theologian, is happy indeed; he is spared many a mental struggle, his mind is not enslaved by dogmas that run counter to reason; he need not first conquer freedom of thought by a violent rupture; he need not defend numberless things that in reality do not bear defence; he does not require special apologetics; and he has never cultivated that latter discipline, which plays such an important part in several Christian denominations.

¹ On p. 154 he makes use of the following words in regard to the Catholic religion: "Compared with the mistakes and rashness in the progress of the Moderns, its checking influence is not always detrimental."

If Harnack meets with disapproval from his strictly orthodox judges, he, nevertheless, and perhaps for this very reason, approaches Judaism. For, once the dogmas are eliminated from Christianity, not much more than Judaism remains. And indeed, on considering his doctrine point by point, we find a surprising concord in the main questions. I believe we may say that Harnack might have found, and might still find more sympathy, not only from some few free-thinking Jews of great eminence, but also from most of the official representatives of traditional Judaism—from most Rabbis of all times and countries—than from those who stand within his own Church¹.

But how does the matter stand? Is it Judaism that approaches more and more to "Christianity in its pure form" as taught by Harnack², or does Harnack gradually approach Judaism? Men like Benedictus Levita³, who know little or nothing of Judaism, and would like to sever themselves from it "in a decent manner," of course believe and proclaim the former. Harnack's Christianity comes very opportunely to them, for it soothes their critical consciences, and makes the leap from Judaism easier for them. They naturally overlook the circumstance that baptism does not constitute a profession of Harnack's creed, but of that very official Christianity which is controverted by Harnack. It is, after all, Harnack that approaches Judaism. But is he conscious of it, does he admit it expressly? Professor Harnack would probably be startled, or would perhaps smile, were he to read how he is stamped here as

¹ Judaism has always acknowledged and appreciated morality and religious sentiment in non-Jewish circles. Cf. for ample proofs of this, Chwolson, *Die Blutanklage und sonstige mittelalterliche Beschuldigungen der Juden*, p. 63 sqq.

² Harnack calls it thus himself in his address as Rector, just published: *Die Aufgabe der theologischen Facultäten und die allgemeine Religionsgeschichte*, p. 16.

³ See his article "Die Erlösung des Judentums," in the October part, 1900, of the *Preussische Jahrbücher*. Levita counsels Jews to baptize their children.

a Jew, and would perhaps say to himself: "How have I deserved this? How do I come by this unexpected and unwished-for honour? Does not my work contain many a passage which abrogates ancient Judaism in unmistakably plain terms?"

An ignorant or careless reader might indeed allow himself to be misled by that abrogation, and think that Judaism was here once more victoriously refuted. But further reflection shows that the abrogation in words lacks refutation by argument, that Harnack pronounces indeed his antipathy to Judaism, but that he does not put anything else in its place, and ultimately almost avows it. The very abrogation looks like a convulsive effort to repress the dawning consciousness of the harmony of Judaism with his own view; for however free and unprejudiced his mind is on other occasions, he forsakes his objectivity on this point. Here he stands, sentimentally at least, upon the standpoint of orthodox Christianity, and is unable to emancipate himself from his traditional notions; here he stands on common ground with the most diverse manifestations of Christianity, as if the highest and holiest dogma of Christianity were to deny the existence of a sound spot on Judaism, as if Christianity could only be saved by belittling Judaism.

It is highly interesting, from a psychological point of view, to analyse more minutely Harnack's attitude towards Judaism. Although the author's love of truth induces him to say many things about Judaism which we gladly adopt, and although he proclaims as Christianity a doctrine which comes very near to Judaism, and is almost identical with it, he underrates the significance of the Old Testament, he indulges in most violent attacks upon the Jewish religion at the time of Christ, and wraps himself in eloquent silence in regard to the Judaism of the last 1800 years.

First of all he belittles the Old Testament. On the one hand, he admits of the Old Testament (p. 30) that "Monotheism had been established long before, and the few

possible types of monotheistic piety had already long come to the light, here and there, in whole schools, in a people. Is it possible to surpass the vigorous and deeply religious individualism of the Psalmist who confessed: "O Lord, if I have only thee, I do not ask for heaven and earth"? Can Michah's words be excelled: "Thou wert told, O Man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of thee; to do what is right¹, to practise love, and to walk humbly before thy God." A few lines after this he says in reference to the Gospels: "Search the whole history of the religion of the people of Israel, look into history at large, for a message from God and the Good so pure and earnest—for purity and earnestness belong together—as we hear and read here." It seems almost as if Harnack were blind to the contradiction between the two sentences quoted here. Or does he really believe that those biblical verses which he himself designated as unsurpassable, to which, of course, might be added innumerable verses more—and even whole books, like Job, and, above all, Deutero-Isaiah—stand really below the Gospels for purity and earnestness? Or, to give another instance, he mentions (p. 85) that during the last two centuries B. C., through the broadening of the historical horizon, the interest of the Jews in the other nations was roused more and more, that the *idea of universal humanity sprang up*. As if that idea had not been forcibly and unmistakably expressed four centuries earlier in Deutero-Isaiah and in many psalms. We are still more surprised on reading (p. 140): "Thus arose the aggressive and absorbing orthodoxy of the State and the Church, or rather of the State Church; *examples from the Old Testament, which are always at hand, completed the process and made it sacred*." With regard to so much that is great and beautiful in Christianity, the influence of the Old Testament is undervalued or entirely ignored; but when

¹ Harnack translates here and p. 90 erroneously: "to keep God's word" instead of "to do what is right."

it is a question of the "State Church" to which Harnack is so greatly opposed, the Old Testament must play the part of scapegoat, as if quite different factors had not co-operated in the institution of the State Church, as though there were any necessity for searching for examples from the Old Testament.

But the following passage on the Old Testament (pp. 116, 117) sounds stranger and more contradictory than any: "How great is the blessing which this book has brought to the Church! As a book of edification, as a book of comfort, of wisdom, and of counsel, as a book of history it has an incomparable significance for life and for Apologetics. And yet its possession was not salutary to the Church in every sense; for, firstly, another religion and another morality than the Christian was written on many pages of that book. Spiritualize their significance ever so resolutely, it will be impossible completely to remove the original meaning by these means. There was a danger, and it came really to pass, that an inferior, discarded element would invade Christianity from the Old Testament." Is it really Harnack who speaks, he whose religion is so entirely imbued with the spirit of the Old Testament? Does he not feel that in saying this he abuses the mother from whose breast he had drawn his best faculties? Does he believe that it is his duty to keep the Old Testament the farther from him, the more he removes himself from orthodox Protestantism, in order to escape from the peril of landing in the neighbourhood of Judaism? It almost looks like it; for we observe the same in other free-minded theologians, their retreat from official Christianity holds equal pace with their depreciation of the Old Testament. Thus Kautzsch, the learned and eminent editor of the new scientific translation of the Old Testament, gives expression to the following sentiments¹: "No scholar will deny to the Old Testament rudiments of the highest and purest conception of God,

¹ *Bibelwissenschaft und Religionsunterricht*, Halle, 1900, p. 46.

and of a truly evangelical morality (compare, for instance, apart from numerous passages in the Prophets, the 31st chapter of the book of Job)¹; nor will any deny the great significance of the Messianic expectation. But it is nevertheless of the highest importance to make the student plainly aware of the boundaries that separate even the most purified Old Testament conception of God, and the highest degree of Old Testament morality, from their perfection in the New Testament." On reading this, especially the few examples from Old Testament morality graciously conceded in a note under the text, and the phrase "apart from numerous passages in the Prophets," one cannot help thinking of an anecdote of a Frenchman, who declared that the Germans were as poets absolutely without any gifts; they had not produced a single great poet *except* Goethe. As if this would not be enough: *ἐνὰ ἀλλὰ λέοντα*. Nobody will assert that everything in the Old Testament stands on the same level; this cannot be expected in a book that combines such divers degrees of religious development. Is, then, everything in the New Testament of the same grain? Is not Harnack under the necessity of weakening, modifying, and trimming for his own use many sayings of Christ, although he never repudiates them entirely?² On perusing the passage quoted above, in which he has not a word to say about the *morally* beneficial influence of the Old Testament upon Christianity, and on comparing therewith what he himself says elsewhere about the unsurpassable moral character of certain Old Testament sayings, one feels constrained to assume that two souls dwell in his breast, one of which recognizes and acknowledges the truth, and the other follows unconsciously some dark impulse, and excludes the truth. How refreshing as against this are the fervour and

¹ The words in brackets appear in Kautzsch as notes under the text.

² To give an example. On p. 60 he reproduces the well-known saying of Christ in the following form: "A rich man will *hardly* come into the kingdom of heaven." Cf. to this p. 55.

enthusiasm with which Cornill¹ sets forth the Old Testament morality, because sentiment does not draw him into another groove than the one into which he is directed by his intellect.

A still greater want of clear-sightedness can be observed in Harnack when he comes to speak of Judaism at the time of Christ. Here the contradictions and unjust judgments accumulate; here lies indeed the principal difficulty for Harnack; here are the most numerous rocks which he tries very carefully to clear, but against which he ultimately strikes in spite of all his art. He tries to understand Christ as *man*, and he thinks that the ugliest possible picture of the Judaism of the time would serve best as a background for setting off Christ's greatness. He falls into the same error as most historiographers of that period, an error which cannot be better described than in Chwolson's striking words²: "With a rude house-painter's brush, dipped in pitch-black paint and mire, he daubs on an unsightly black background, and writes under: 'This is Judaism at the time of Christ'; then he takes another, finer brush, dips it in gilt, and paints on the background the picture of Jesus. The picture is finished with two, sometimes with three brushes, and he names it by a respectable and learned name. I would allow myself to suggest another method, a rational and historically correct one, instead of this. Let them paint as a background the *paganism* of that time, with its criminal, licentious, and frequently insane rites, with its cruel assassinations in the contests of gladiators and fights with beasts, its promiscuous domestic and social life, its harshness and cruelty, &c.; then let Christ's splendid form appear, and let it be shown how through him and through his personal activity the whole criminal, decayed, antique world, which was devoid of God and salvation, falls to pieces and is annihili-

¹ Especially in his lectures, *Die Psalmen und die Weltliteratur, Das alte Testament und die Humanität*.

² *Das letzte Passamahl Christi*, pp. 81, 82.

lated; and in its stead a new world was constructed, with grand and sublime teachings of a kind, omniscient, and holy God, with teachings of true humanity, chastity, piety, devotion to, and confidence in God, and a doctrine of comfort hereafter, &c. Such a picture will be as great as it will be true, and in it Jesus Christ will appear in his great and incomparable splendour." Most Christians believe even to the present day that the significance of Christ and Christianity consists in the internal victory over Judaism, and rather acknowledge the heathen, i. e. the Greek elements of the new religion, than such as were taken over from the Jews, as if Christianity marked a greater advance upon Judaism than upon paganism. Harnack himself is much milder and flattering towards Hellenism than towards Judaism, and is much more ready to do justice to the high ethics of the Greek thinkers than to Jewish ethics. On one hand he places Jewish ethics very high indeed (p. 45): "Jesus found with his own people a rich and profound ethical system. It is incorrect to judge of the morality of Pharisaism merely by the casuistic and trivial phenomena which it exhibits." But immediately after, as if he regretted this admission, he proceeds: "Intertwined with worship and the petrified in the ritual, the morality of holiness had certainly been turned into the exact opposite; but everything had not yet become hard and dead, there was still something alive in the depth of the system. Jesus could reply to the questioners: You have the Law, keep it; you know yourselves best what you have to do; the sum total of the Law is, as you say yourselves, Love to God and to your neighbour." Again on page 66 he says: "The priests and Pharisees kept the people in bond and murdered their souls." On p. 120 we read: "The Christian religion originally developed its strength amid the wreck of the Jewish religion." Any child can perceive the unsolved contradictions between the sentences quoted. If there existed in the Jewish people a rich and profound ethical system; if it is incorrect to judge of pharisaic

morality merely from casuistic and trivial phenomena, how is it then possible to say that the Pharisees murdered the souls of the people? We know that there were among the Pharisees some abject people and wretched hypocrites; we know this not only from the Gospels, which have a pronounced antipathic tendency, and are in this respect biassed, although Harnack will not admit it (p. 14), but we know it from a source which lies under no suspicion, and yet of which, strange to say, Harnack makes no use, namely, from the Talmud, which is altogether pervaded with the spirit of pharisaism. Nevertheless, the Talmud in several passages brands such impure types that were found in the midst of the Pharisees¹. Where has there ever been, and where is there a religious community, in the midst of which such elements cannot be found? The bad and the hypocrite are international and interconfessional; in their own camp they are better known and recognized, and more abhorred by the better and nobler men within than without. It is therefore very wrong to make a whole religious community answerable for its objectionable members, who defile and abuse religion, and make use of the latter as a mask and label to cover meanness, deceit, and crime. Harnack also commits this injustice when he sweepingly identifies the Pharisees with those abject fellows, who indeed borrowed their name, but who were repudiated and energetically discarded by the former.

Harnack commits another error in asserting that the morality of holiness was turned into its exact opposite by its intertwining with worship and the petrification in the Ritual. This assertion cannot be better refuted than by another utterance of Harnack's (p. 109): "Even the innermost feature, religion itself, does not manifest itself free and isolated, but grows, so to say, within a bark, of which it stands in need." If Harnack thinks himself able

¹ Cf. Chwolson, *Das letzte Passamahl Christi*, p. 114 sqq.; *Die Blutanklage und sonstige mittelalterliche Beschuldigungen der Juden*, p. 29 sqq.

to excuse with these words certain Christological notions, which, however, he himself does not share, he must, in his capacity as a great historiographer of religion, also know the value of worship and rites, and acknowledge their worth for the very raising of religious and moral life. Worship and Ritual in Judaism have succeeded in preserving pure monotheism. They have kept it free from that turbidity and those obscurations which it received at the hands of Christianity, and which Harnack is at such pains to remove. Worship and Ritual were consciously set up in Judaism as "a fence round the Law," and they loyally fulfilled their task. At various times and with many individuals, this fence, instead of forming a protection for the religion, became a massive wall, which obstructed air and light. But such were always abnormal cases, and are not decisive of the whole question. I will be silent about the inner impulse which many ceremonies gave to the Jewish religion¹, of the educational value in disciplining the will which the numerous precepts of the Ritual, often seemingly so devoid of meaning, possess. I would only ask whether Harnack knows the ethics of the mediaeval Jewish philosophers, especially the ethics of Maimonides, who kept steadfast to worship and Ritual, and whether in presence of such facts he still believes that the morality of holiness was petrified in Ritualism. Harnack's aversion to the Rites goes so far, that he judges of the official leaders of the Jewish people at the time of Christ in this manner (p. 33): "They conceive God as the Despot, who watches over the ceremonial of his domestic arrangement . . . They saw him only in his Law, which they had made into a labyrinth of passes, byways, and secret exits. . . . They possessed a thousand commandments from him, and therefore thought they knew him. . . . They had made of religion a worldly profession, there was nothing more abominable."

¹ On the other hand, Harnack, p. 174, with striking tolerance, excuses Protestantism for having retained so many forms from aesthetic and pedagogic motives.

The whole context shows that Harnack understands under the official leaders the Pharisaic teachers of the Law, the disciples of Hillel. In that case his words are a misrepresentation and a libel, which cannot be excused by anything except by a complete ignorance of pharisaic Judaism. Even a superficial acquaintance with Talmud and Midrash would have taught him better, and given him a different notion about pharisaic Judaism. He would look there in vain for corroboration of this monstrous charge, and if he derives the justification of his verdict from Matthew, ch. xxiii, it would be only necessary for him to peruse, for instance, a few pages in the above-cited work of Chwolson¹, to learn several truths which may appear to him perhaps painful and new, but which are nevertheless irrefragable, and which I do not repeat here out of respect for Harnack.

Such ignorance of the Rabbinical writings from which alone a picture of the Judaism of that period can be obtained, explains also how Harnack can say quite seriously (p. 58): "The social conditions which obtained in Palestine at the time of Jesus, and long after, are not sufficiently known to us." They are very well known to every Talmudist, although it must be admitted that the scattered and colossal material has not as yet been systematically worked. Only an entire ignorance of Jewish jurisprudence, both in theory and practice, makes it possible for Harnack to say: "Jesus was in a nation, the greater half of which had, throughout generations, demanded its right in vain, and which knew right only as force"; and the following sentence can only have been written in complete ignorance of the real social conditions (p. 58): "The ruling classes, to which above all the priests and Pharisees belonged—these, partly in conjunction with the secular authorities, possessed little heart for the wants of the poor people." Generally it is assumed that the Sadducees belonged to the ruling classes, and that the Pharisees were pre-eminently recruited from the lower

¹ *Das letzte Passamahl Christi*, pp. 77-81.

classes, and therefore belonged to the oppressed and not to the oppressors. But, apart from this, the whole Rabbinical, i. e. Pharisaic literature, breathes so much love for the poor, and developed so perfect a system of charitable organization, admirable even at the present day, and still so efficacious in instilling into the Jews a sense of charity, that the grounds on which Harnack bases his judgment are quite incomprehensible.

When we collect all these utterances together, we involuntarily gain the impression that, to speak with Chwolson, "the mother of the brilliant child must by all means be represented as a monster." That impression will be strongest where Harnack is at pains to fix exactly the advance effected by Christ. He admits on pages 30, 31 that Christ's teaching contains nothing new, that even the Pharisees possessed it; but directly afterwards he cites a passage from Wellhausen, which is a worthy counterpart of the above-quoted passages, in which the Pharisees are also roughly handled. We read on the same page that "the pure source of the Holy had been disclosed long before, but sand and rubbish had accumulated over it, and its water was polluted. The case is not altered, when Rabbis and theologians subsequently distilled it, even if they were successful." Harnack chose this metaphor of distillation rather uncautiously, for his *Wesen des Christentums* is the product of a thorough distillation such as was never attempted, nor was ever necessary to be attempted, by any Rabbi in regard to Judaism. Not only the official Christianity of the present day has to endure this distillation of his, but also the Gospel, which, as was already pointed out, has acquired under his hands a quite new complexion. Harnack evidently claims for himself alone the right to distil the water of his religion, and he would then throw the turbid parts removed by him into some other source, the purity of which is inopportune to him. Thus he says immediately after: "Pharisaic teachers had announced that everything was comprehended in the

command to love God and one's neighbour; they had spoken glorious words, which might have gone forth from the mouth of Jesus. But what have they effected therewith? That the people, that their own disciples rejected him who took these words seriously. Everything had remained weak, and therefore injurious. Words cannot effect anything; the effective force is the personality that stands behind them." Strange if every influence was weakened, that it was still possible for the pharisaic religion to survive the downfall of the Jewish State that immediately followed. How could it weave a common bond that encircled the Jews that were scattered in all directions? How could it kindle such heroism in the Bar Cochba revolt? How could it stir up its followers to such unparalleled fidelity to their faith that they joyfully accepted an uninterrupted martyrdom of almost two thousand years, so that they endured in spite of all persecutions, and do not perish even now? The Christian theologians will not and cannot acknowledge the spiritual and moral force of Judaism. By doing this they would lose the ground under their feet, for such acknowledgment would involve the most crushing charge against their mode of construing history. The disciples of the Pharisees rejected Jesus certainly, but did they do so because he took the love of God and men seriously? Did they reject the historical Jesus, as depicted by Harnack, of whose activity they knew little or nothing, who offered them neither what was new to them, nor what was assailable by them? They rejected Jesus only in the aspect under which he was represented by his followers; they would know nothing of the deification of man, which ran counter to their religion; they would not acknowledge his resurrection; they would and could not consider him as a "saviour," and in this they were in perfect harmony with that which Harnack teaches to-day.

But we still do not know in which points the Gospel marks in Harnack's opinion an advance beyond Judaism. Is it the severance of religion from the Jewish national

existence? But this was completed only by Paul, and Harnack admits himself (p. 109) that the characteristic elements that were of most importance to the first Christians can, if necessary, be carried out also within the confines of Judaism and in connexion with the synagogue. If, therefore, according to Harnack, Christ did not teach anything that was peculiar, but was only the noblest representative imaginable, and the highest living embodiment of the Jewish teaching, how can he be designated as the father of a new religion? However great the number of people may have been that were made acquainted by him with the Jewish teaching, to which they were converted by his example, he cannot for all that be designated as the founder of a religion, as little as Hillel, nor did he claim to be such, as his famous saying proves¹: "Think not that I come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily, I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

Or does the chief significance of Jesus lie in the sacrifice of his death? Harnack nowhere says so directly, but he seems to possess a particularly high notion of its effectiveness. He says (p. 99) that "there can be no doubt that the death of Christ made an end to the sacrifices of blood in the history of religion," and he puts it as certain that "the inclination which led to such mode of sacrificing had found its satisfaction and therefore its termination in the death of Christ." But surely the Jews were not really induced to abstain from animal sacrifices by the death of Christ, of which they scarcely took any notice. They did not stand in need of such external motive, for ever since the days of the Prophets their best men had opposed the sacerdotal service. The sense of the religious worthlessness, even of the harm, of this service had gained such mastery, that Rabbi Eliezer

¹ Matt. v. 17, 18.

could use the great words¹: "From the day that the temple was destroyed an iron wall fell down between Israel and their Father in heaven." Therefore the great national calamity, the destruction of the state and the temple, appeared to a pharisaic teacher of the law, from a religious point of view, as a blessing, because it was the external motive for the abolition of sacrifices. And again, R. Jochanan ben Zakkai, who witnessed the destruction of the temple, comforted his disciple R. Joshua, who on seeing the ruins of the temple lamented the cessation of sacrifices as atonement²: "Do not be grieved. We have an atonement left, which is of equal value, namely, the practice of benevolence (*Gemiluth Ḥassadim*); for it is said: I desire love, not sacrifice." It was, therefore, not the death of Christ, but the utterances of the prophet Hosea, which enlightened the notions of the Jews of the time on the subject of sacrifices.

The significance of the death of Christ is depicted by Harnack (pp. 99, 100) in beautiful and eloquent words. But he should apply the same measure to the whole of Judaism. Jewish history since the rise of Christianity has been one great sacrifice, the sacrifice of a whole people, which cheerfully offered itself up for one great idea; for which it has accepted on thousands of occasions death and martyrdom, hatred and persecution, scorn and degradation; which has resisted, and does resist, all allurements; which, in spite of all temptations, does not show a desire to become unfaithful to its God and to disappear from history.

The following words of Harnack (p. 102) show to what a degree he is inclined to consider the Judaism of the last 1800 years as a negligible quantity. He says that "the indelible belief in the victory over death and in eternal life has taken its rise from that grave. Do not let people point to Plato, to the Persian religion, and the later Jewish thoughts and writings, all that would have perished and

¹ Bab. Berachot, 32 b.

² Aboth de R. Nathan, ch. iv (ed. Schechter, fo. 11^a).

has perished." No, Judaism does not do Professor Harnack the favour of having perished, even though he may ever so many times draw up its certificate of death. It is alive, and that which Harnack says of Christianity applies with greater force to Judaism (p. 187): "It has outlived the changes in the views on life; it has stripped off like a garment all those thoughts and forms which once were holy; it participated in the collective progress of the *Cultur*; it has spiritualized itself, and has learned, in the course of history, to apply ethical principles more firmly." It is highly characteristic that he does not once, in his book, mention the Judaism of the last 1800 years; he thinks that he is allowed simply to eliminate it from history. Were it not for one passage (p. 38), in which he speaks of the Jewish scholars who deny Christ's originality, one would not learn from Harnack that there was a Judaism after the spread of Christianity, or that a Judaism still exists. Some centuries hence Harnack's book may perhaps be used to prove that at his time there were no longer any Jews in Europe, and especially in Germany; for, otherwise, he could not possibly have been silent about it, considering that he occasionally speaks of Islam and Buddhism. His silence will be invoked as evidence against the statements in statistical works, according to which almost 100,000 Jews were living in the place where he worked. And how can this silence be explained? Is it from a wish to spare Judaism and to evade an unpleasant discussion? Harnack, who does not shrink from a struggle with any power, can hardly have been so considerate and tenderhearted towards the modern Jews. The cause is quite different; it lies in this, that if he had taken notice of the existence of the Judaism of to-day, he would have been compelled to admit that everything which for him constitutes religion is to be found in that Judaism in a much purer and less turbid condition than in any of the official churches. The same remarkable circumstance is exhibited in his

inaugural address as Rector, already quoted; we cannot learn therefrom that there ever was, or that there is yet, a Jewish religion. In his consideration of the universal history of religion he does not once mention the name of Judaism, and since he is obliged to speak, either well or evil, of the religion of the Old Testament, he reclaims it for the Christian religion, calling it "the primitive history of Christianity." On the other hand, we read in the Rectorial address the following interesting passage (p. ii): "The history of that religion which possesses the Bible comprises a clearly recognizable and uninterrupted period of almost three thousand years, and can even at the present day be studied as the living religion. It rises in these three characteristics so prominently above all other kindred manifestations, that we may safely say that he who does not know that religion knows none, and he who knows it and its history knows all." Every impartial reader, be he Jew or Christian, will say on reading these words that they cannot mean any other religion except Judaism, for it is only to Judaism that they are all applicable. Yet Harnack says all this of Christianity, though the remark is in strange contradiction with what he elsewhere says¹ of the *history of the Jewish religion*, that it was "the profoundest and richest that any nation ever had, and indeed, as the future was to prove, in reality the religious history of the human race."

It is astonishing how a man who taught at a University together with Steinthal can bring himself so entirely to ignore Judaism. I feel inclined to think that Harnack can scarcely have approached those Jews who were qualified mentally and morally to give him a correct notion of Judaism. Had he done this his acumen and his love of truth would have induced him somewhat to modify his conceptions. He himself observes very strikingly in the same Address (p. 15): "Absolutely correct notions can only be gathered from the living

¹ *Wesen des Christentums*, p. 89.

religion, from the contemplation of piety." Unfortunately, he does not put that maxim into practice in regard to Judaism. Otherwise he would not have failed to allow a modest place to Judaism in the history of religion, and in the present time, by the side of Islam and Buddhism; if he had made a somewhat closer acquaintance with the various types of Jewish piety in Eastern and Western Europe, he might even have discovered types the counterpart of which cannot be found in Christianity, as, for instance, the Lamdan¹, the Chasid, the Maskil, but that, on the other hand, most of the types found in Christianity exist here also.

On summing up all that has been said here I arrive at the following result: Harnack strips from official Christianity, as the Church teaches it and the State propagates it, all those elements which Jews also refuse to acknowledge. He arrives in this way at a form of religion which approaches very near to Judaism, he tries to blind himself against such approach by rejecting the old Judaism on account of some specific excrescences, and by ignoring altogether the present Judaism. It is true that such a method is simple, but it is, as we have seen, best refuted by that which Harnack himself says. Thus Harnack has, against his will, succeeded in justifying Judaism, and he confirms Jews in their loyalty and attachment to their religion, in the place of which he can put nothing newer or better. It is a particular joy and satisfaction for Jews to know that they are spiritually so near akin to a man of the mind, the learning, and the religious earnestness of Harnack, and they will not be misled when he is often unjust to Judaism, for they have to deal with a man who does not offend them willingly and intentionally, but who is ruled by a deep-rooted sentiment of which he cannot entirely free himself.

I do not know whether Harnack will ever become

¹ Cf. the beautiful description of the Lamdan in Chwolson, *Das letzte Passamahl*, pp. 73, 74 n.

cognizant of these lines; if so, I do not believe that I shall have converted him to another conception, for, as he says himself at the end of his book (p. 188) on this subject, our proofs are only variations of our convictions.

On the other hand, Jewish readers, to whom I cannot sufficiently recommend the study of Harnack's work, will receive from it much instruction in points other than those mentioned above. They will gain from it much religious suggestion, they will consider many religious questions in a new light, they will understand better many sore spots in the present Judaism, and comprehend more earnestly many dangers that threaten it. For the same grave struggles that are being carried on in Christianity have their play in Judaism, and what Harnack says on the last four pages of his work about the contemporary condition of the evangelical Church applies, *mutatis mutandis*, for the most part to Judaism also. We see there how equal causes have equal effects. Sometimes indeed the causes are different with us, but the effects are much the same. If, e. g., in Christianity the protection by the State acts as a check upon the development of religion, with us, where that factor does not exist, it is, on the one hand, hostility without, and, on the other hand, a desire to imitate within, which call forth similar results. An abundance of sound observations and subtle remarks, which can be unconditionally applied to the Jewish religion also, are scattered all over the book. This is, for instance, the case with the conception of Reformation which is clearly expounded on p. 168, further that which is said on pp. 4, 5 about apologetics, also that which is said on pp. 114 and 123-125 about the dangers that lie in religious forms, and what he says on p. 41 about prayer: "The prayers are the decisive factors of the higher religions." In this sentence Jews can very well acquiesce, both in respect to their own prayers and in respect to the fact that the Christian prayers, from the "Our Father" to the Church hymns, are only an echo of the Jewish prayers. But more than all will every

reader derive satisfaction from what he says on p. 62 of those curates of souls who indulge in good living: there Harnack's moral nature shows itself in the most beautiful light, and compensates for many points with which we are unable to agree. The candour also with which he discloses and discusses the sore spots of the old and the new Christianity (e. g. pp. 79, 115-116, 121, 130, 131-132, 140, 146-148¹, 150, 159, 163-166, 179 sqq., 184), the impartiality which impels him, notwithstanding his high appreciation of Luther's significance, to ascribe to him many grave faults and errors, must please every friend of historical truth.

It is true we find also in the book many general statements which will meet with just objections. Thus on p. 155 he says that "No church can have so much self-deception as to disregard essential conditions when receiving new members, especially from other confessions." Daily experience teaches the opposite. The method practised on the reception of Jews into Christianity contradicts that assertion very completely, and has therefore often been rejected by earnest members of the Church, who have considered proselyte hunting as something unworthy.

But enough of fault-finding. Harnack quotes at the beginning of his book a passage from Goethe in order to refute the view that Christianity has outlived itself. I will therefore conclude my remarks also with a citation from Goethe, by which Jews can confirm their conviction that neither has Judaism outlived itself²: "The people of Israel is the most tenacious people on earth; it is, it was, it will be, in order to glorify the name of Jehovah throughout all times."

FELIX PERLES.

Königsberg i/Pr., 12 Sept. 1901.

¹ Does not Harnack feel that he is unjust towards the Judaism at the time of Christ when he places it, on p. 148, on the same level as the Greek Orthodox Church?

² *Wanderjahre*, bk. II, ch. ii.

POSTSCRIPT.

After the conclusion of this article I received the latest number of the *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums*, in which Leo Bäck discusses at length Harnack's lectures (pp. 97-120). As a matter of course his views resemble in many points that which is said here, especially in the refutation of the wrong judgments upon Judaism in the time of Jesus. I saw no reason, notwithstanding, to alter anything in my article, because I look upon this harmony between two critics, who wrote quite independently of one another, the most satisfactory confirmation of the correctness of their strictures; and because, on the other hand, the two articles show deep differences in tenor and contents.

F. P.

23 Oct. 1901.